

WYCOMBE ECLIPSED IN FIRST MATCH

Walthamstow Avenue 4; Wycombe Wanderers 2

OPENING the new campaign in the Isthmian League at Walthamstow on Saturday, Wycombe Wanderers found their old rivals Walthamstow Avenue at the top of their form—and rarely looked like holding them. And they were lucky in the end to come away only two goals down.

Determined Avenue, looking superior in every department, comfortably withheld an ineffective Wycombe attack for most of the game to finish with an exciting display of attacking football.

Both teams had started at a fast pace, with beginning-of-season nerves causing some errors at both ends. Samuels and Horseman were quick to test the Avenue goalkeeper but it was the home team that took the lead in the 14th minute through a Drabwell header.

Keith Samuels replied by forcing Lindsay, in the Avenue goal, full length to take a powerful 25-yarder, but Avenue were now beginning to settle down with some fine work in midfield and on the right wing.

After 20 minutes, Ford drew a full-length save from Maskell and a few minutes later Drabwell, picking up a right cross, headed over the wrong side of the bar.

PUNCH LACKING

Wycombe's forwards, with Peter Roystone coming in at centre forward, lacked the support and the punch of their opponents. Only Samuels and the persistent Worley, on the right wing, looked at all menacing.

By comparison, inside-forward Leakey, for Avenue, took advantage of midfield space to send his forwards away in many dangerous raids.

Wycombe had a couple of chances towards the end of the first half but failed to take them until Samuels, unmarked on the edge of the box, thumped one home from close range while a flat-footed Avenue defence looked on.

IN HIS OWN GOAL

Avenue quickly retaliated with forays which sorely tested the Wycombe defence and just before half-time the omnipresent Drabwell struck again. Another cross from Murphy left Maskell stranded and the Avenue centre-forward was there to poke it home.

Wycombe began the second half with a disastrous defensive blunder. Right-back Rundle, passing back with two Avenue forwards pressing him, put the ball the wrong side of his own 'keeper. A few minutes later centre-half Faulkner almost repeated the error when he was forced to head clear after a menacing Avenue attack.

The Wanderers pushed towards the Avenue goal with a little more purpose now but still lacked the skill of their opponents and it wasn't long before the home team stamped their superiority on the game.

However, it was Wycombe who were next to score. From a free-kick, Horseman found a gap at the end of the Avenue defensive wall and coolly stroked the ball home.

From then on the Avenue defence began to tighten up, leaving their forwards to entertain the crowd with brisk raid after raid. In one cliff-hanger no fewer than six shots were fired at the Wycombe goal for the ball finally to go in from Collett—but only after an infringement.

It was left to Samuels and Worley to go it alone in the Wycombe attack while their defence was at full stretch to contain a hard-working and often brilliant Avenue forward line.

Avenue's fourth came from a run and a finely taken shot by winger Collett pushing the ball past a back and the goalie to score.

Wycombe: Maskell; Rundle, Beck; Baker, Faulkner, Gale; Worley, Samuels, Roystone, Horseman, Holmes.

Avenue: Lindsay; Terry, King, Ford, Clarke, McKendry; Murphy, Hopwood, Drabwell, Leakey, Collett.

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DRABWELL brilliantly led the Walthamstow attack in this Isthmian League game and scored the first two of Avenue's goals. Winger Collett got Walthamstow's fourth goal near the end.

Avenue's other goal came when Wycombe 'keeper Maskell failed to hold Rundle's ill-judged pass-back.

Wycombe also had their front-line stalwarts, notably Samuels and Worley, but generally their brilliance was spasmodic.

Samuels equalised Drabwell's first goal, scored in 15 minutes, and Horseman reduced the lead after Walthamstow's third goal with a free kick.